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ABSTRACT

The Strategy Selection Matrix (SSM) is offered as a means for matching teaching technique to the individual special needs student. Three steps in the SSM are described: development of an intra-individual learning style profile based on 14 learning components; review of the individualizing teaching strategies (such as tutoring, continuous progress curriculum, and learning stations) to arrive at a range of options; and matching the profile with the column of teaching strategies to discover the most appropriate strategies for each student. Alternative uses for the SSM include analysis of needed material adaptations to accommodate learning styles. Sample profiles charting performance on social, cognitive, sensory-motor, and emotional development are included, as is a sample SSM matching strategy with component. (CL)

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The Strategy Selection Matrix - A Guide for Individualizing Instruction

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The Strategy Selection Matrix

A basic assumption in the development of I.E.P. short-term objectives is that achievement will occur through the choice of strategies and materials which match the learner's individual style. Due to the proliferation of teaching techniques and instructional materials, this selection process is often an overwhelming and threatening prospect for the teacher. A means for enhancing the accuracy and ease with which a teaching technique is matched to the individual learner is the Strategy Selection Matrix (SSM).

Individualized instruction presumes a fairly extensive knowledge of the person as learner. Therefore, the first step in using the SSM calls for development of an Intraindividual Learning Style Profile. This Profile assesses 14 learning components grouped under four areas: social, cognitive, sensory-motor, and emotional (See Table #1). Standardized testing and informal assessment procedures such as anecdotal records at previous grade levels can suggest probable student ratings for some areas; however, teacher observation will be the most important determinant in the process. Once data is collected in all areas, the ratings of the components on a scale of Low/Medium/High are entered in the Intraindividual Profile section of the SSM (See Figure #1). The teacher marks an "X" in the column at the approximate level of student functioning for that component.

The next step involves a review of the individualizing

teaching strategies (see Table #2). If the teacher is unfamiliar with any strategy, or uneasy about its rationale, application, strengths, or weaknesses, a standard text on classroom management should be consulted (Wallen and Wallen, 1978). In addition, the strategies should first be screened in light of the teacher's situation and personality. Some techniques should be immediately applicable, others may require some adjustments in the classroom, e.g., Learning stations, while a few may be very difficult to utilize in a given situation, e.g., computer-assisted instruction. The teacher should eliminate from consideration any technique found unsuitable to the specific learning situation. (In many cases, the strategy is limited only be teacher creativity. While biofeedback equipment might be found at a Community Mental Health Unit, for example, a simpler approach such as student-kept records of pulse rate may make the strategy workable.)

The last step in using the SSM involves matching the Intra-individual Profile with the column of teaching strategies to discover which are the most appropriate strategies for each student. Notice that the Intraindividual Profile is divided in half by shading, the unshaded portion corresponding to a Low-Medium rating, the shaded portion corresponding to a Medium-High rating. When a teaching strategy requires a Low-Med range in the learning style component under review, the corresponding box in the SSM is unshaded. Likewise, if the technique is suitable for a learner at a Med-High level in a particular component, the appropriate box is shaded (See Figure #2). In

some cases a teaching strategy may be adaptable through the entire range of a learning style component, but only with modification of materials which takes into account the student's intraindividual rating on that component. In these cases, an asterisk will be found in the appropriate boxes.

The teacher now matches the learning style which has been entered into the Intraindividual Profile with the teaching strategies under consideration for the student (See Figure #3). Scoring focuses on those boxes in which a match is made between the rating on the Intraindividual Profile and the graphed estimate on the SSM, i.e., unshaded on the Intraindividual Profile with unshaded in the appropriate box in the SSM. Reading across the SSM from left to right, the teacher totals all the matches for a particular strategy. Boxes containing an asterisk are not included in the tabulation. The sum of the matches is compared with the number in the far right column which represents the minimum number of matches which should occur between the strategy and the Intraindividual Profile for a reasonable chance of success. If the total number of matches for a student equals or exceeds that minimum number in the right-hand column, the teacher is encouraged to use that strategy for that individual.

As familiarity with the SSM develops, the teacher will be able to devise more sophisticated uses for it. One recommended teaching strategy might modify deficits in another specific area of learning style, e.g., behavioral contracting for low social perception. The successful remediation of the learning style component would then open the way for application of a

strategy not previously recommended because of the deficit, e.g., peer-tutoring. Furthermore, the Intraindividual Profile should provide the teacher with indications of how materials must be adapted to take into accounts aspects of learning styles such as processing levels, e.g., concrete materials for a concrete level learner in the use of modules.

The purpose of the SSM is to provide suggestions for individualization which take into account differences in learner approaches in school settings. It facilitates the ease and accuracy in the choice of individualizing strategies, thereby increasing the student's chances for a successful achievement of short-term I.E.P. objectives.

Teaching Techniques for Individualization

Tutoring:
- a) peer
- b) foster grandparent
- c) parent
- d) volunteer

Small groups

Low stimulating environment, with V, A and H modalities as primary foci

Continuous-progress curriculum:
- a) programmed instruction (LAP)
- b) computer-assisted instruction (CAI)

Student contracting
- a) achievement
- b) behavioral

Learning Stations, with V. A and H modalities as primary foci:
- a) work
- b) learning
- c) interest

Outside classroom instruction

Modules

Biofeedback

Table #2

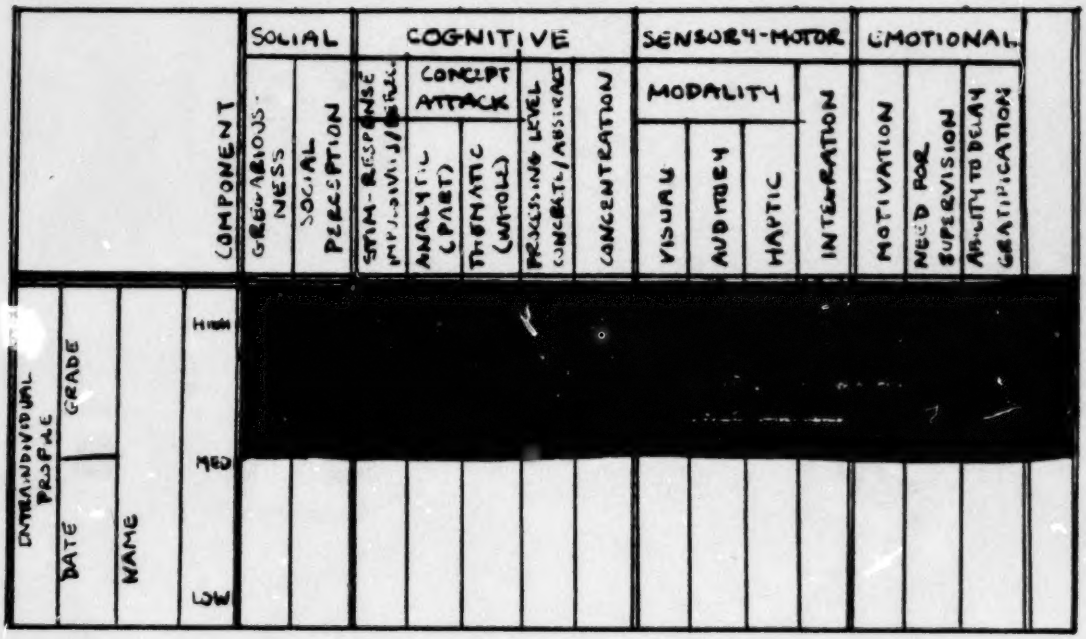

Figure #1

Intraindividual Profile

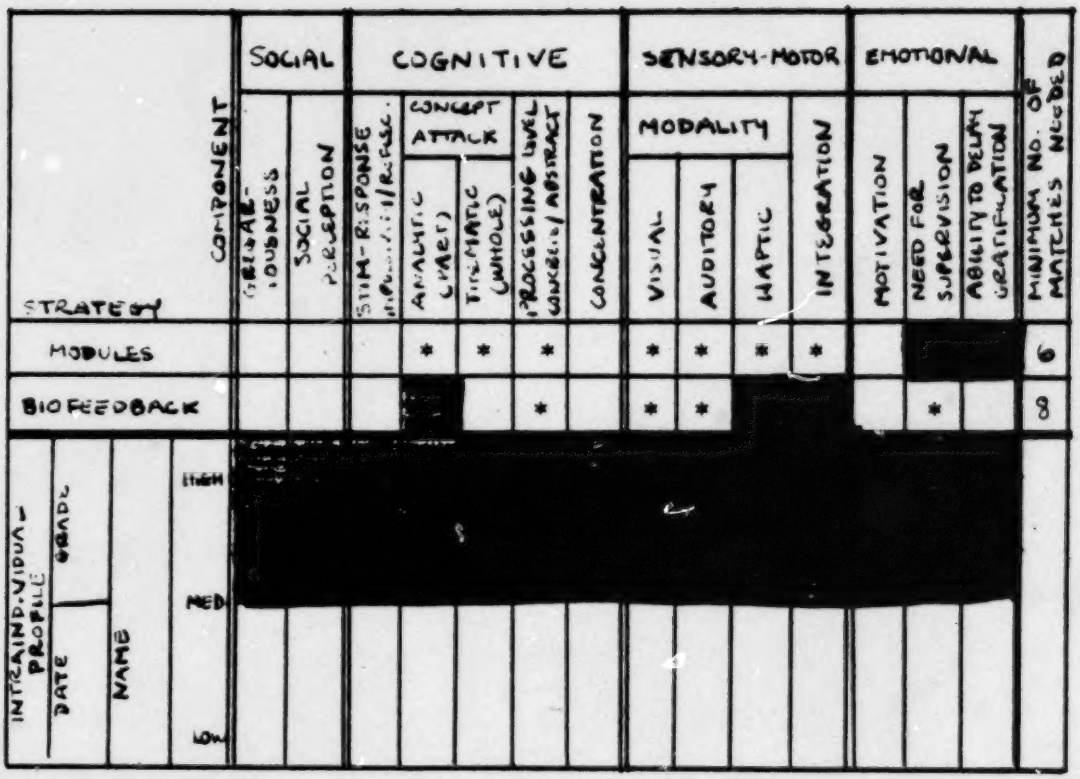

Figure #2

Modular and Biofeedback Strategies on the SSM

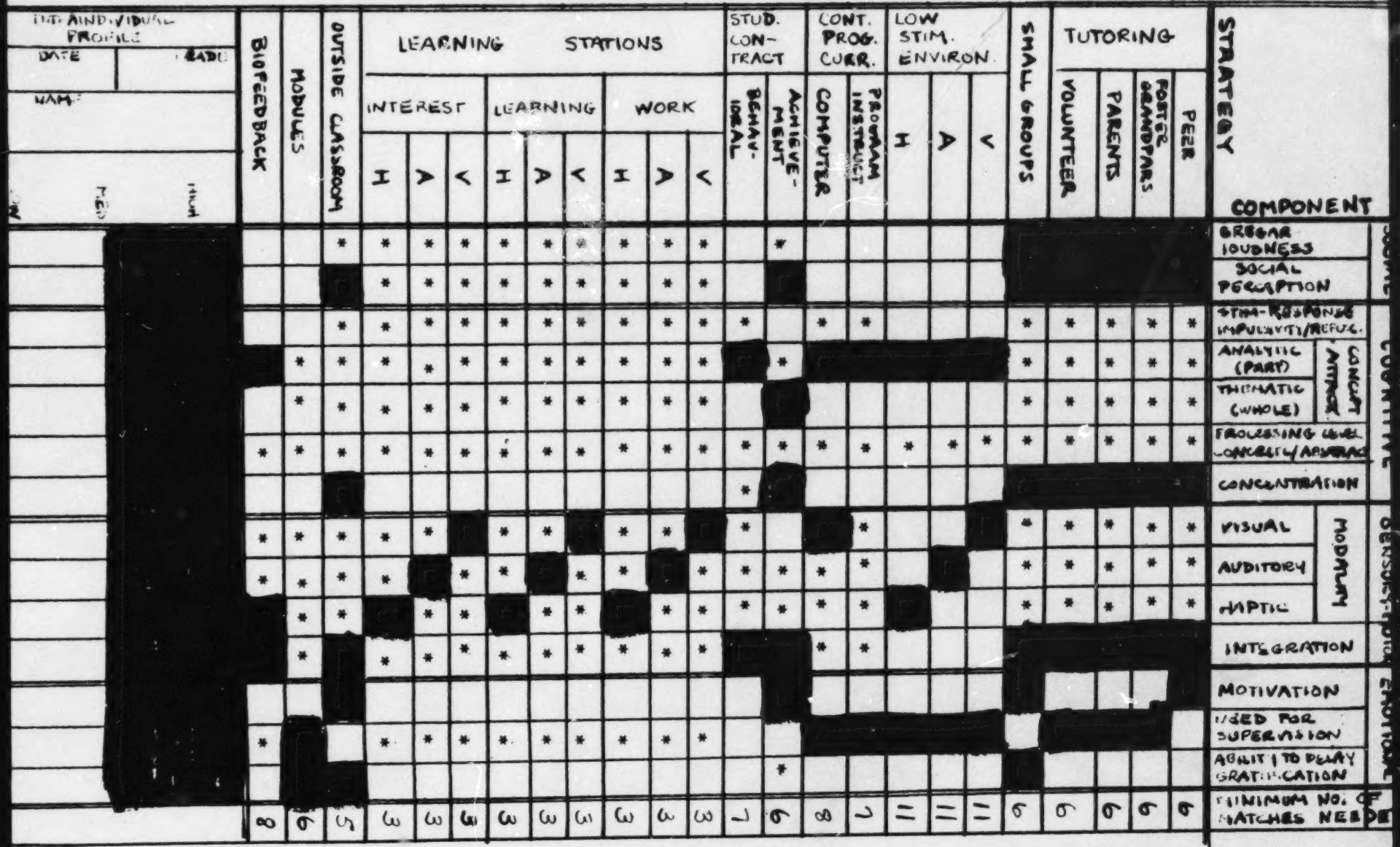

Figure #3

Strategy Selection Matrix